

'Ashok Kumar was a great performer and fine person'

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MUMBAI: The Indian film industry lost a doyen when Ashok Kumar died of heart attack on Monday afternoon. Most remember *Dadmuni*, as he was popularly called, as a simple and lovable person, always encouraging new talent. "He never had a bad word for anyone and this gesture was reciprocated by the entire industry. Everybody will remember him for his genial nature and, of course, his marvellous performances," Pran, who has co-starred with Ashok Kumar in a number of films, said.

Actor Shammi Kapoor said the industry had lost a great performer and a fine person. "I had the misfortune of never having made a single film with *Dadamuni*. But I worked with him in an advertisement for a *paan masaala*. During the shooting, I was really amazed that even at such an age, he was so full of energy and enthusiasm," he remarked.

Veteran actor Dilip Kumar, upset at not having made it to the funeral, said, "The industry has lost a doyen, but I have lost a great friend and mentor. I don't know if the present-day audience is familiar with Ashok *bhaiyya's* stature and contribution. But in his time, Ashok Kumar was a towering figure. Yet, he remained a man who was never overcome by his popularity and stardom. He set a trend and style of his own and achieved the zenith of popularity." He said that *Dadamuni* would be remembered for his unfailing love and concern for all. "Even when I was still to make a mark as an actor, he would telephone me and encourage me," he said, adding that Ashok Kumar was a well-read man, conversant with French and Persian. "*Dadmuni* even asked me to help him with his study of Urdu, he revealed.

Remembering old times, Dilip Kumar said, "We used to frequent his bungalow in Malad, where we played cricket and badminton and feasted on *bhabhiji's* bhajiyas. Ashok *bhaiyya* never liked us leaving. I only wish my own health had allowed me to spend more time with him during his illness."